

REMARKS

Claim Amendments

By this amendment, claim 2 is canceled, claims 1, 3-6, 34, and 41 have been amended, and new claim 42 has been added. Claims 1, 3-7, 34, 35, and 39-42 are pending. Claim 42 has been added. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections

The Office Action rejected claims 1-3, 6, 7, 34, 35, and 39-41 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 5,983,933 to Ohmi et al. ("Ohmi"). The Office Action rejected claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) in view of Ohmi.

Claim 1, both as amended and as previously presented, recites a projection that extends from a substantially planar surface of a housing and is spaced apart from first and second ports. In Ohmi, the portions 43, 45 of the coupling 30 include substantially planar surfaces, but do not include projections extending from these surfaces that are spaced apart from ports in the coupling. While the Office Action states that "one can construct a planar surface at a 45° angle and fairly consider the corner to be a projection," a cross-sectional plane of an object simply is not a surface, considering the broadest reasonable interpretation of the word "surface."

Applicants acknowledges that claims must be given their broadest *reasonable* interpretation. MPEP 2111. However, Applicants respectfully asserts that an interpretation of the term "surface" that encompasses any cross-section of an object is not reasonable. The words of a claim must be given their "plain meaning" unless they are defined in the specification. MPEP 2111.01; In re Zletz, 893 F.2d 319 (Fed. Cir. 1989). The plain meaning must be given to the claim term "surface," because Applicants' specification does not assign a special meaning to the term "surface." Clearly the plain meaning of the term "surface" does not encompass any cross-sectional plane through an object. The first dictionary definitions listed for the word surface are "the exterior or outside of an object or body"; "the outermost or uppermost boundary"; and "one or more of the faces of a three-dimensional thing." Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986). Applicant respectfully asserts that the ordinary and accustomed meaning given to the term "surface" by those of ordinary skill in the art does not encompass

cross-sectional planes of an object. An interpretation of the claim term "surface" to encompass cross-sectional planes renders the term meaningless. An interpretation of a claim term that renders the claim term meaningless is not a reasonable interpretation of the claim term.

Ohmi does not disclose or suggest a bridge fitting with a projection that extends from a substantially planar surface of a housing, as understood by those of ordinary skill in the art, where the projection is spaced apart from first and second ports. As such, Ohmi does not anticipate claim 1, and claim 1 is in condition for allowance.

Claims 3-7 and 39-41 depend from claim 1 and are also in condition for allowance.

As amended, claim 34 recites a bridge fitting having a locating feature disposed on a bottom-most surface of a housing. Ohmi does not disclose or suggest providing a locating feature on a bottom-most surface of a bridge fitting housing. Claim 34 is in condition for allowance.


Claim 35 depends from claim 34 and is also in condition for allowance.

New claim 42 depends from claim 1 and is also in condition for allowance.

Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are now allowable.

Respectively submitted,

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